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THE LITTLE  
HOUSE  
BY THE WAY

By CADDIE WINSTON



Illustrated by  
MARY McNAUGHTON.





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THE LITTLE HOUSE BY THE WAY



















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This little book, with the heart of the writer, and a tenth of the proceeds, is dedicated to the Infant Department of the Baptist Sunday School of Palestine, Texas, which has given to her the sweetest sunshine of life for more than twenty years.





## Illustrations

“I never pass The Little House that I do not learn a lesson of life.”—Frontispiece. ✓

“Jim explained the goose had followed him and was so tired he had to tote it home.”  
—Page 6. ✓

“John was as proud of the fortune as if it was his.”—Page 23. ✓

“The Little Woman was rocking to and fro, eyes shut tight.”—Page 27. ✓

“They’ve gone to bed to save wood, and I’ll sit up and think awhile.”—Page 34. ✓

“I grabbed him to my heart, and God gave us all an understanding, in the dawning of that morning.”—Page 35. ✓





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"I never pass The Little House that I do not learn a lesson of life."



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By

CADDIE WINSTON  
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# The Little House By the Way

## CHAPTER 1.

### Introducing the Inmates.

I never pass the little house that I do not learn a lesson of life. I can hardly pass without stopping a little while, for I know that I shall bring sunshine away each time, and that the oft bringing will only leave more to follow.

The little woman and her boys are so original and versatile, that it is good for one's heartache and rheumatics to be in their presence. The little house is a rented one, for they are not able to have one of their very own. This little woman is a wage earner; her two boys are following in her footsteps, earning here and there what they can, while they also go to school, for she is an ambitious woman, and sees her boys through magnified glasses, which I think is a fine idea. She says "What's the use of being afraid Jim's going to be lazy and worthless; I've picked him out for a capitalist, for he can certainly turn money over and add to it; and John, I've picked him for a preacher. Why, the meaning of John is a royal gift from God—do you think He's going to give me a royal gift, and turn round and let that gift bring sorrow to me? Of



course he ain't got preachers' ways yet, but some preachers ain't got God's ways, and I ain't discouraged about John, if I did hear him saying words the other day that cussing folks say. John didn't know I heard him, and I wouldn't tell him for nothing. If you make a boy think you think he is somebody, he's pretty apt to be that somebody, and John's going to be a preacher—I tell him so, and I have done asked Got to put it in his heart, and I'll put it in his mind and life, and he's going to be it."

Such inspiring talks as this attracted me to her. She said to me the other day, "Mr. Tilly, you know, is off hunting work and the raising of these boys is all on me." Mr. Tilly was seen once by the neighbors, shortly after the Tillys moved in the little house by the way. He left to hunt work, though I can't see why he didn't get it here; the little woman gets more offers, she and her boys, than they can accept. Jim is only nine years and John is seven, but they are little hustlers, taking right after their ma. Why, Jim got up at 4 o'clock every morning and went to pick cotton for Mr. Smith, two miles from town; Mr. Smith was to pay him four-bits a hundred for picking, but at the end of the week Jim was charged up two-bits for each dinner, so he didn't make much. "That child is a good feeder," his Ma said, "and I'm glad he got a whole week's dinners, tho' I did put him up lunch; of course the country air made food tempting to him." Another farmer wants Jim to pick peaches for him; he lives further out, and Jim's Ma let him get a second-hand bicycle to go on. "We'd have to get up at three o'clock to go if I hadn't," she said. "I don't mind our wak-



ing up so early, but it disturbs the neighbors so. I think Jim will get more on this job, he will get four-bits a day and with a nice little lunch and eating peaches all the time, he won't have to eat dinner."



## CHAPTER 2.

### A Show In Town.

A first-class tent theatre is in town, and Jim Tilly is so taken up with it that he quit picking peaches. I guess he would have anyway, because he broke the bicycle, and it was too far to walk; he made two dollars and a goose that week. The whole neighborhood was surprised when Jim came in late one evening, dragging a broke bicycle, and the goose fluttering and squaking under one arm. Mrs. Tilly was still out, delivering laces and handkerchiefs, for which she takes orders. Mrs. Willingham who lives just across from the little house, feels it her bounden duty to overlook things for Mrs. Tilly, so she came at once on hearing the goose, being that all the chickens next door were in a state of excitement. John was screaming with delight, and begging Jim to give it to him. While Mrs. Willingham was trying to settle and pacify things, Mrs. Tilly arrived. Jim was very important over the whole, and giving his ma the two dollars, explained the goose had followed him and was so tired he had to tote it home. The goose is a tame, affectionate thing, and I believe did follow Jim, though some of the neighbors seem to doubt it. "Ma, let me have it to sleep with; Jim's got Betsy." Betsy is Jim's little bull pup. "Jim's got to take that goose back tomorrow." "Back where? He followed me from the woods, and I ain't gointer take it to the woods, like the two babes, to die there," Jim said. Any-





Mary  
McNaughton

"Jim explained the goose followed him, and was so tired he had to tote it home."





way, the goose is there yet, and gives perfect satisfaction to all the neighborhood children, who play in the yard, while Mrs. Tilly is away selling laces and handkerchiefs. The tent theatre is the enchanted spot for the Tilly boys now. It is pretty near the little house, which adds charm. The boys distribute bills, bring water, and do lots of things for the show folks, and get passes. "I am not in favor of it, Jim, but seeing you and John are so smart and regular financiers, we will go. A dime ain't much for me to pay for a seat, and to see Hamlet played will take me back to my girlhood, when your Pa took me to the theatre at the city hall one night. Hamlet was a fine young man. His Pa died and his Ma married a few months after, while everybody was still crying for him. I reckon it was the best way to get over her grief. They played it well, and we'll all go and see these folks play it. We must start early and get a front seat." "Ma, what'll we do about Pa, if he comes?" John said wistfully. "The last I heard from your Pa, John, he hadn't located a job yet, so we won't think about him coming; it's us a going that is bothering me now. Go hunt up a clean waist and take a good wash, and you'll look as nice as anybody's child. Jim, did the pup tear the sleeve clean out of your Sunday shirt? Get it, and while I spruce up a little, you take this needle and thread and just tack it in. I'll fix it good when I have time, but we won't have time for it now, for we must get there before the rush. Folks won't be looking at you, anyhow; we are very small potatoes in a hill by the side of the theatre show, that everybody is going to look at."



## CHAPTER 3.

### A Recess of the Heart.

The little woman ran over to tell me about the theatre, the next morning; "Seeing you couldn't go, I thought I'd come over first thing and tell you about it all. Jim and John never saw a theatre show before. They saw the spotted man and snakes last winter at the side show, but that is nothing to edify one's mind. Hamlet was grand, and when he gave his solidiquy, I just cried. To be or not to be, he started off with. It carried me back to the night Mr. Tilly took me to the city hall to see Hamlet play, when I was a girl. I thought then I would a great deal rather be than not to be, but I have had a heap of ups and downs since then, and if it were not for Jim and John, I am sure I'd rather not be. Just think of them so smart and helping to their mother, even financiering the theatre show, for when we got there, Jim told the door man that I was his Ma, and he wouldn't charge a cent, and we had the very front seats, tho' it did hurt my neck, having to hold back to see the stage folks. I didn't tell Jim though. John is too young to appreciate Hamlet but I know he understood it as far as he went. After his scare of the Ghost, he lay his head in my lap and his legs on Jim, and went sound asleep. It was awful shaming to me, trying to get him awake, he screeched so and got so mad. Jim even financiered that, and thought of a plan. He says, "Ma, don't you feel like Pa has come while we was at



the theatre? I feel just like it; wake up John so we can show Pa the goose." "Of course, that was enough for John. That child is always longing for his Pa, and wanting stamps to write to him. He dreamed the other night he had found a job, and had sent for us all to come. I never throw cold water on such a nice dream, and when he asked me if I reckoned it would come true because he told it before breakfast, I said we'll wait and see, John. And we are waiting still, Mrs. Fuller, like we have for so long." This was as much as she ever said. No reproach—but an aching heart. "What did Mr. Tilly do when you first married him?" "When I first married Mr. Tilly his avocation was bookkeeping. The firm failed in business, and he lost out. He has been hunting bookkeeping ever since. He liked to found it once, but the man got well who was going to die, and that put him on the hunt again. Mr. Tilly don't like no other kind of avocation, seeing he is so well fitted for this." "Oh, yes," she answered, "he is able to do anything, but he is more fitted for bookkeeping. I am trying to keep up both ends till he finds it. I must go and deliver some handkerchiefs and laces for a wedding today. Please, Mrs. Fuller, just sorter notice over my way; the boys are at home. Jim hasn't taken another job since the show come, he wants to go every night; and mornings, he is awful tired. It was hard work, the peach picking, and cotton picking, with the trips to the farms too, and I'm letting him sleep late.



## CHAPTER 4.

### **The Beginning of a Hero.**

I just stopped at the little house for a minute, in passing. It was the last night of the tent theatre, and I was glad of it, for the whole town had gone stage struck. I am looking for a home talent to spring up any time.

Jim Tilly came from the sink all washed and combed up—ready to go to the show. “Jim, you are not going tonight,” the little woman said. “Why, Ma. this is the best night of all, and they’re going to play Buffalo Bill.” “No, Jimmie, you can’t go, you have gone show crazy, and I have made up my mind that you are going to bed. I hope your feet are as clean as your face. Now, don’t spoil such a smart face with such crooked looks. Remember, anybody can be pleasant when things come his way, but a hero is the man who smiles when things go the other fellow’s way.” Jim was a sorely disappointed little hero, and saw that things were going another fellow’s way. “Well, Ma, will you promise me sure, to wake me up, if there is a fire in town?” Jim was passionately fond of fires, and never missed one, if possible, but the whole Tilly family slept while a neighborhood fire was raging, which was the last one in town. Jim hadn’t got over the near and yet so far feeling of that fire, and gained the promise of Mrs. Tilly that since he couldn’t go to the last night’s performance, she would wake him up for the prospective fire. John, who had



gone to bed piped out, "Ma, let Betsy sleep with me tonight—I never get to sleep with her—Jim's got her all the time." "No, she shan't." "I wouldn't be so selfish, Jim; if you enjoy anything, you ought to pass it on." Seeing she had conquered Jim in the show matter, she let this drop, and both boys were soon sound asleep in the same bed, with Betsy as far from John and as near to Jim, as possible.

The little woman was weary with the day's cares and labors. "Now that they are so comfortable, I will draw us a cup of tea and that will rest me." "Do you know, Mrs. Fuller, I love to talk to you better than anybody, you are like my mother—never asking questions about folks' business, but always interested in their work, and listening to what they say, without butting in—my mother used to say a good listener was more rare and more to be prized than a good talker."

I knew by this that she had something on her mind and was going to confide in me. Just as we were going to drink our tea, Mrs. Willingham "Just stepped over for a little spell," and broke it up for the time.

My minute had grown into an hour—I had learned some sweet truths of life in that hour, and left with them in my heart.



## CHAPTER 5.

### A Job In Sight.

Mr. Tilly had almost landed an avocation. She was about to tell me the night Mrs. Willingham stepped in: "No, Mrs. Fuller, it is not exactly bookkeeping and then too it's so kin to it, you can't hardly tell them apart. He is going into the Life Insurance trade. We can all get our lives insured then at cost I reckon. Don't all grocery folks and dry goods folks get their things at cost, Mrs. Fuller?" It was my opinion that they do. "Well, I reckon I'll take out a thousand on Jim, for he's worth every cent of it. And John ain't worth no less than Jim. I'll take a thousand on me, so they can have half apiece."

I suggested that Mr. Tilly might not see it in this light, and would want it turned over to him. "Well, if he does, I'll pay more, and go to some other company. Seeing he is so misfortunate about money matters, I'd be afraid he'd fall through on this. No, I have not told the boys yet. If it don't turn out so, they will be so disappointed. Why, they just cried because that man didn't die that their pa was about to get his avocation, and I said then I would wait next time till he got it good and fast before I told them chaps anything about it. Children are so unreasonable, and think anything must be done whether it can or not. No, I shan't quit my work on account of the Insurance. The boys must be educated, and I might miss that money when they start to school, for books



cost as well as suits and shoes, and then the Insurance trade may not be so good at the start."

I proved to be a good listener to the practical little woman's talk, and kept it all in my heart, hoping that Mr. Tilly would turn up something to support his family on, for the little woman is weary, and down deep in her heart has almost despaired of a book-keeping job, and is beginning to think Mr. Tilly ought to do something else. She is worn out trying to make both ends meet, and has to stretch them like everything at that.

"Ma, why don't you pick Pa for a preacher?" "John, your Pa was picked before I was a picker," his Ma answered. John asked this on the way from meeting the other night. The meeting is held in a tent, at the same place the theatre was held, and the neighborhood is as interested in it as they was in the show. Mrs. Tilly believes in raising her children religious, and takes them to meeting every night that she ain't too tired. "Of course, they go to sleep, Mrs. Fuller, and I have a time getting them home, and the foot-washing after, but the influence, and the moral standing of it is what I am looking after. The other night we lost the key, Jim was too sleepy to go back with me, and fell asleep on the gallery until me and John got back. We searched the tent over before we found it. John made me promise to let him take charge of it after this."

Dear little woman, worn out and weary—but bright and cheery under all circumstances. She is a lesson for me.



## CHAPTER 6.

### News Withheld.

The whole neighborhood is interested in the Tillys, and when the postman stopped and handed a letter to John for his Ma, more than one stopped her work to run over a bit. I staid at home, remembering the lesson of a good listener she had given me, and knew that when all had gone and her work was over, she would come right to me with it all. Somehow, I have always been made a vessel for everybody's trials and learned early in life to let the vessel be self sealing, and air tight. "Being we are so tired out, not of the meeting, Mrs. Fuller, but from it, we ain't going tonight, and I told the boys we'd come over a bit with you; if they get sleepy, they can just lay down on your nice floor and take a sleep. Jim is so used to giving his hand, he'll miss it awfully, but the rest will be good for both of them." I made them welcome, which indeed they were, and always are, for they are like salve to a wound, and a poultice to a rising; those boys are so full of courage, and don't know what it is, either, and their ma is so brave. There is many a soldier who never fought a battle, and they don't all wear breeches. We talked about the meeting, and the mourners and the joiners, until the boys went to sleep on the floor. Jim is much concerned about his sins, and John says he is a sinner too. "That child just won't let his brother get ahead of him on anything,"



Mrs. Tilly remarked. "It is well enough," I said, "to let them come in while young, before the weeds take root, and make bitter flowers, that even flavor the milk so we can't drink it. The more good you cram in them, the less room they'll have for bad."

"I had a letter from Mr. Tilly today; I began to think I wasn't going to get to read it, the neighbors are all so kind and interested in us, and it seemed all took a notion to come over at the same time; I just stuck the letter in my bosom till they all left. Mrs. Willingham said she thought she saw the postman give John a letter, and Jim spoke up and says, he did; and it was a valentine for me, telling me to mind my business. Jim can manage and financier equal to a grown-up boy. He did get a valentine once for fun like that, but just to think of that child thinking of that valentine at the exact right time. I read the letter at last and Mr. Tilly will start the Insurance business there, and after he gets his first money, will send for us. It nearly breaks my heart to leave you all, Mrs. Fuller; you have all been so good to me; Mrs. Willingham is always ready to watch the chaps and tell me everything that happens, when I am out; and you are always giving me handouts. I will never forget you." A tear was in her eye. "Oh, Mrs. Tilly, if everybody was as grateful as you, this would be such a smooth world. Why it's just like what they call at a concert, incore. When you talk like that, I wish I could do more for you. You know they clap and cheer until the performer comes back and does it again. Don't be too sad Mrs. Tilly, it will all turn out all right," I told her.



## CHAPTER 7.

### A Rare Case.

Jim Tilly was sick. The neighbors are all good and kind as can be. Dr. Ableman called in another doctor and they said he had got the Apendy Sigheters, and would have to go to the hospital and be operated on. "Seeing as I am hardly able to make enough to buy our vitals and other things, I don't know what to do," the little woman said to Mrs. Willingham. Sometimes I believe that poor folks bear these things better than rich ones, because they have to scheme and think about how they are going to pay. while all the rich ones have to think about is their grief over it. John piped out, "Ma, we'll sell Sallie and the pup." Sallie was the goose. John thought since they had trained her, she would bring a big price and it was a sweet thought in him, being that Jim had give her to him. The pup would not bring so much. Mrs. Willingham spoke up, "No, you don't have to sell the goose, neither the pup, what is this neighborhood for, and what's that meeting been for, who is my neighbor, Mrs. Fuller—ain't it the one who needs me?" I believed so. "Then, Mrs. Fuller, you start the ball a rolling; they'll all do what you say." I thought of my five dollars I had saved so long to buy me a new bonnet, and then I thought of little Jim, of how he used to go before day apicking peaches and cotton, and not having dinners like he ought. I thought of how he filled up on peaches and came home so tired out, and how he was sick



and to be cut open to get the Apendy Sighters out, else he would die. The five dollars would have choked me, and I said, "I'll start the ball with five dollars." By night, between chickens, butter and eggs, that the corner grocery man took to help out, the money was raised, except the last five dollars. The neighbors are worth living by, they are good for everything, and dimes was pulled out of old stockings, put away for Christmas. John told Dr. Ableman that all the money was raised but five dollars, and asked him to take the goose for that. The doctor, not knowing the remarkable traits of Sal, and the amusing capers she could cut, told John he would take the goose, and for him to keep her until he called for her. Everything was arranged, and a hack wagon came for Jim. I went with his ma, and we walked; we left him all night alone with the nurses. They was to take it out in the morning, and the doctor didn't want us there. Poor John cried himself to sleep over Jim. We could hardly wait for morning to come, and as soon as we could, we three went walking towards the hospital, and sat down where we could watch it. I went up to the door and asked the nurse how Jim was. He was just fine, and slept well; they dieted him and had just scrubbed him for the operation. I went back and told his ma all this. In about an hour we heard the awfullest shrieks. The little woman shut her eyes and covered them with her handkerchief, sobbing all the time. The shrieks got nearer, and looking up the road, to my amazement, was Jim in his nightshirt, tearing through the woods. "Jim Tilly," I screamed, "Come here." I thought he had lost his mind too.



The doctors and nurses were following him, and they all landed under the trees with us. "What on earth does this mean?" I asked. "I won't have it took, I won't, I won't," Jim screamed. The doctor said after Jim was all ready, and on the table, they went to give him the ether in the false face, and he jumped off the table, and ran like lightning, screaming, "I won't have it took."

We all went home, without Jim's breeches, hailing the first wagon that passed.



## CHAPTER 8.

### Whatever Is To Be, Will Be.

Strange to say, Jim did not die; in fact, he began to improve right away. I reckon the surgical shock cured him. Anyway, it was a scare to the whole neighborhood. The little woman wanted to give the money all back, but I would not hear to it. "Just take it and put it in the bank, so you'll have it next time," Mrs. Willingham said; and so she did. "I'm sure proud of my goose, ma, she feels like she was bran new. If I was going to let the doctor have her, I wouldn't want to look at her every day anyhow." "I knew the doctor would never have taken the goose, but I wanted John to be honorable," she said to me that night, when we were rehearsing the whole thing. "Mrs. Fuller, maybe it was the best that Jim run off from them doctors. Maybe if they had cut it out, he would never have run again. Some preachers say, whatever is to be, will be, and I don't believe that cutting was to be." I didn't either, seeing Jim was so hearty again. We all had a lesson, and it was to be better to each other, because we none of us know when our Apendy Sighters will have to be cut out.

Everything is moving along now; Mrs. Tilly is doing well with orders, and everybody is good to her. No questions are ever asked about Mr. Tilly. Nobody knows about his insurance avocation but me and her, and some day she is looking for a letter with money in it, and then before long she will



be leaving the little neighborhood, where she has had so many ups and downs. The boys started to school; John came in and said, "Mrs. Fuller, see if I look fitten;" he meant, looked nice enough. I grabbed him to my heart and said, "You are fitten for a King's Palace," and he is. Such truth and honor as that boy has got. He came in yesterday and told me that while I was away someone come and left the gate open, and Sallie got in and eat up my turnip patch; now, he didn't have to tell me that; nobody knew it. It was his honor—he cried over it.

"You just come and help me, John, and we'll plant some more, and soon they'll be as big as them," I said. And he will come, too, for he never forgets. I am glad school has started, for now the boys will be there most all day, and that will be some help to the little woman, for she hates not to know where they are. Since the meeting, she feels that she must give to the church, and those less fortunate than herself, and she is denying herself things that she ought to have. "Why, it is a pleasure for me to be able to give, I have so much done for me, I want to do for others," she says. If I knew Mr. Tilly wasn't going to send for them, and that she'd have to keep up everything all the time, I'd fix up some way to buy a horse for her. I could let her have my old buggy, it seems I'll never have another horse for it. It is too hard for her to have to walk, and deliver and take orders—I wish men was



as smart as women. Here she is, making a living, and keeping the little house as clean as a pin, and training the boys, and cooking between times, and all the time athrowing out sunshine, a heap more of it than what comes in.

What man can do all this?



## CHAPTER 9.

### An Investment.

Jim has proved some more financiering that may mean a horse for his ma. She had not turned in for the night; it was a very busy day, and everybody wanted their articles at once; Mrs. Willingham was keeping up with the boys, and the little house for the little woman; Jim had been gone all day, not showing up after school. I had looked over, a hundred times, but no Jim, and it was supertime, and he always fixed something for supper. Sometimes he got all the papers of the neighborhood and run to the tomoly man who give him tomolys for papers. I began to think of what I could fix for the little woman and chaps, when I heard an awful noise. Every neighbor came running out of the house. There was Jim, coming as fast as he could on a donkey. "Oh, Jim, where did you get him?" John screamed. "It ain't no him, and she is mine for good and ever more." "Will she holler all the time like that, Jim?" "Of course not, she is lonesome from her home, but she'll like us all, John, and she don't eat nothing—why, a few shucks and ma's dishwater will keep her rolling fat." By this time the little woman had got home, tired and worn out. "Jim, did that donkey follow you home like the goose?" "No, Ma, honest she is ours to keep and have." Jim wasn't going to tell before everybody the wherefores of his prize, and I just listened, knowing after awhile they'd all be over to tell me. I fixed





"John was as proud of the fortune as if it was his."







a little supper and called them all over. After awhile Jim said, "Mrs. Fuller, ain't she a beauty?" I thought she was, and asked if he thought she'd holler throughout the night, seeing some of the neighbors is easy woke. That wise Jim had brought a sack of shucks with her, and we were solid for one night. "Now, Jim Tilly, sit down right here and tell me where you got that donkey." If he ain't the schemeinist child I ever saw. He heard about a man gathering up his crop, and wanting to trade the donkey to somebody to help him. If Jim didn't go from school, and is going every day and help, and got the donkey in advance, and the shucks throwed in. "I'll be gone till dark, Ma, but just think, we got a donkey." I began to see a horse in trade for the donkey, and the old buggy pulled out, and the little woman riding, peddling her goods, but I listened and did not advise yet. "Jim, you are a regular financier, and you'll make us all rich some day," his ma said, which made him two inches bigger. "Me and John will fix something for supper every night 'til the donkey is worked out, Jim, and I believe it is a good investment on your time. Your ma is certainly rich in live goods." "Jim, let's name her Flora," John said wistfully, and from that day she would come to the name, and developed into a fine strong little animal, Jim riding her every day to the farm to help with the crop, and home always safe for supper. John was as proud of the fortune as if it was his. Jim said, "Of course, she's all of ours, John, when the crop is gathered."



## CHAPTER 10.

### **Man's Extremity—God's Opportunity.**

The cold days of winter were almost upon us. The little woman was still cheerful and though weak in faith, was still looking for a letter, with money to help them through the winter, or else to take them to Mr. Tilly. "Just which ever is the best for him, Mrs. Fuller. Sometimes, I'm afraid, I'm losing faith in man, but it makes me lean on God more. Here's the winter on us, and the boys have got to have clothes, and we have to have wood. I've got such a nice little stove, to warm up and cook on at the same time. It was give to me by one of my customers; she used it one winter when they was kinder short of money. It takes one who has suffered, to understand one who is hurting all the time. Now, if she hadn't been where I am now, she never would have thought of giving me that stove. Well, I've got the stove, and that is the most important for I couldn't warm up and cook by the charcoal furnace this winter, and when we do get some wood, the stove is up, all ready for it." She came over the night after this talk, she and the boys, "just to warm up a bit. Mrs. Fuller, and to tell you the good luck." I thought of the letter. "What do you think, Jim's been doing some more financiering and John's going to help, too." "Ma, let me tell Mrs. Fuller, 'cause I got it." It was hard to tell who was the proudest, the little woman of her boys, or the boys of the privilege of being her boys. "Go on, Jim, and



let's hear it, tho' I won't be surprised at anything you can do, after you worked a donkey out." "A goose, too," piped John. "Yes, John, and honest as daylight, too. I believe every bit of it. Sallie being so happy with you all, makes me know she was a prodigal goose, and has found a home."

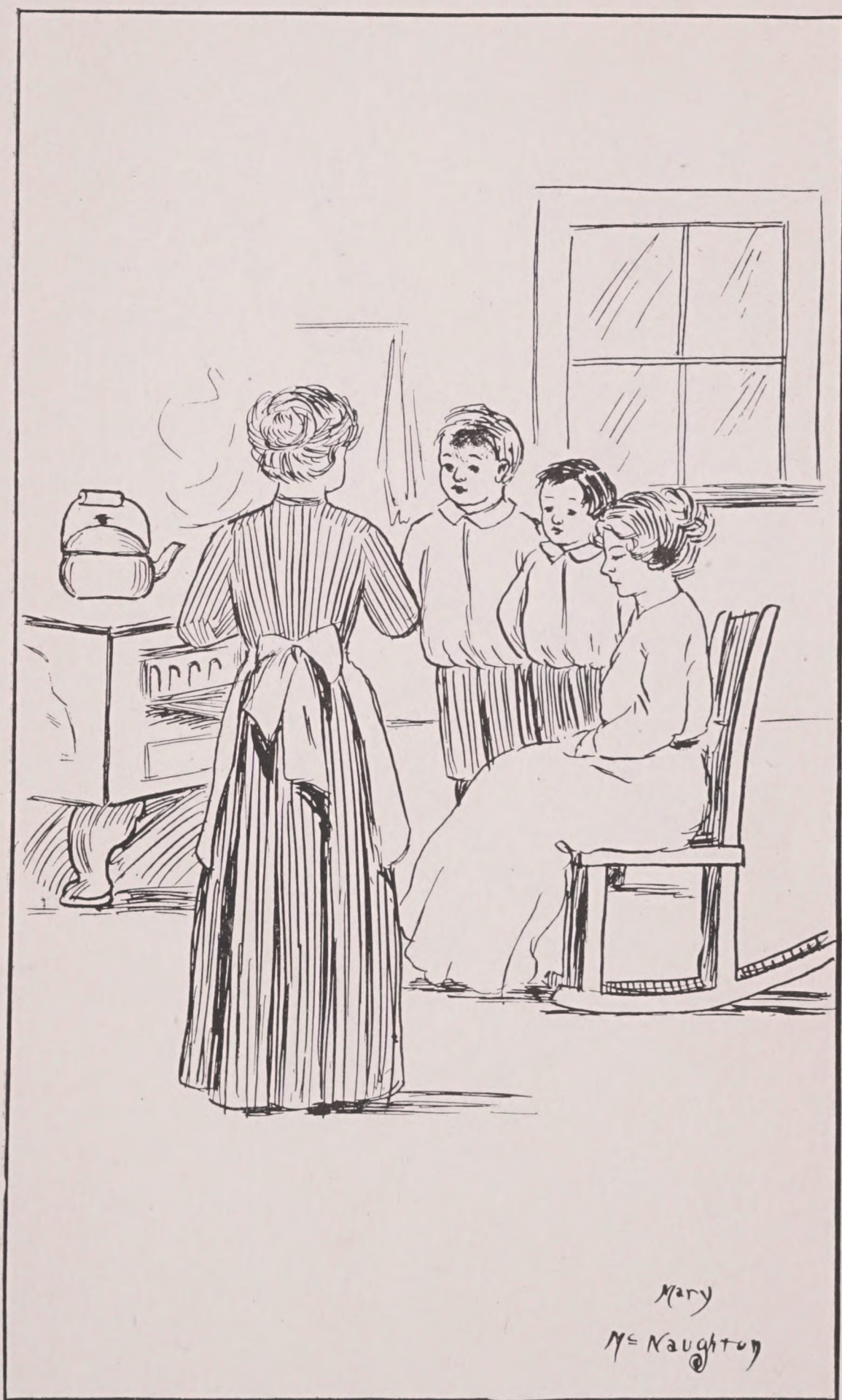
Jim went on to state that he met the man he worked the donkey out for, and he told him if he and John would come over every day after school, and help him clear up some ground for a potato patch, he would give them a load of wood every Saturday, and bring it to them. "Now, if that ain't heaven sent, Mrs. Fuller, I'll give it up. I hate for the boys not to have any time to play, but we all have to work seems like." "Why, Ma, we'll play all the time we are cutting the trees; we'll play we are American citizens and are fighting for our rights, and that the trees are our enemies trying to take our land." "I'm the captain," said John. "Yes, and Jim's the general and will bring it out all right. Mrs. Tilly, you are rich with two such strong arms to lean on." She gave me a satisfied smile. Well, things did begin to look bright. The wood was a blessing. The little woman had all the orders she could fill for Thanksgiving, which was coming faster than we were getting ready for it. The boys kept well and strong. The donkey toted double, which was another blessing, both boys going right from school to the country, and getting home, always safe and ready for a hearty supper. Somehow, I had begun to feel like they all kinder belonged to me, and having no kith or kin, they filled a great big part of my life. I always was looking for the letter, doubting too if it



would ever come, and dreading it more than I could ever say. They meant so much to me; the little house, and the little folks, that seemed to ever inspire me to nobler thoughts and better deeds. The little woman makes me want to be more patient, more sacrificing. Jim makes me see the world is good, and a job waiting for everybody in it; all you've got to do is to go at it. John, our Preacher John, shows me every day, life is full of sunshine, and I must catch my share, or somebody else will get it.

Is it any wonder I dread the letter?





“The Little Woman was rocking to and fro, eyes shut tight.”







## CHAPTER 11.

### A Message.

"Mrs. Fuller, Ma says come over and see her cook supper on the little stove," John came running with this message two days before Thanksgiving. I knew the little woman wanted me to eat supper with them, and I would enjoy nothing half as well. I took all the fresh eggs just gathered, for I knew how the boys loved hard boiled eggs, and I was going to see they had enough. The stove was a wonder, and warmed us all up and cooked for us too. The boys felt to call the stove It, was almost sacreligious, and always said "She's a dandy," which she was.

Supper was over, and we was having a nice time clearing away the dishes, listening to the boys talk of the day at school and the woods, when a knock sounded on the door. It seemed Mrs. Tilly from the very first sound of the knock was limp and undone. I went to the door—it was a telegraph message "For Mrs. James Tilly, Charges collect." Of course my heart was sad, for it could be nothing but sending for them. After paying the boy and signing for it, she turned to me, "I can't open it, Mrs. Fuller—you open it and read first, and I'll shut my eyes." Poor eyes, so weary with looking for the letter that never came—poor heart, ever yearning for the perfection that was never to be. How could I tell her? I read slowly, wiping my spectacle glasses again and again. "What is it, Mrs. Fuller?"



Jim asked impatiently. The little woman was rocking to and fro, eyes shut tight. I read:

“TELEGRAM.

“(Charges Collect.)

“James Tilly died suddenly in his room today. No means. Wire at once.

“WILLIAM HARRIS,  
“Mayor of Lone Pine.”

“That’s Pa, and we’ll have to send for him.” “How?” piped John. “Oh, Mrs. Fuller, what will we do?” asked the little woman, who was facing the situation bravely. But I could see shattered hopes in her face, and a longing for things to be, that never were, in her eyes. I saw a consultation was necessary, and sent John over for Mrs. Willingham. She come in her cheer-up clothes, saying, “Things ain’t never so bad, they couldn’t be worse.” John had told her on the way. “Of course, it is a sad Thanksgiving for us all, Mrs. Fuller, but we can make it bright, there’s always somebody to make glad in this world.” It would take more money for this function than it would for the Apendy Sighers, and we began to plan. The little woman had that money in the bank for hard times, and if it ever came, it was now. I started another five dollars, and soon it was all in sight, and we wired a night message to send Mr. James Tilly right on, to his wife, and the banker wired the money to the mayor—when anything is got to be done, it can always be. Mr. Tilly was met by all the neighbors, and a nice hack wagon was fixed in black to bring him home in. Everybody



thought he looked just like hisself, tho' I couldn't see how they could tell, for they never saw him but the one time, but I didn't say nothing. The poor little woman was submissive to it. I think he turned out better than she expected, deep down in her heart. Well, we made a Thanksgiving occasion out of it; and on Thanksgiving morning we all went to the little graveyard, walking slow; of course, Mr. Tilly went in the hack wagon that we had decorated in black. It all went off nice and peaceful. The preacher read about "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." I couldn't see where Mr. Tilly's trouble came in, of course his days was few, being he was only forty-five, and so many live twice that. I made them go home with me for Thanksgiving dinner; Mrs. Willingham, too. Poor Jim seemed to feel it, and said, "Oh, Ma, why did God send Pa to us thataway?" John piped in, "So we could go to a funeral, of course."



## CHAPTER 12.

### Out of Sight—Out of Mind.

Thanksgiving Day ended with a funeral, a dinner, and a pound party that night. While the little woman and the boys was eating dinner with me, the neighbors was all planning for a Thanksgiving pound party to be given at the little home, "to cheer them up a little after their great loss," Mrs. Ableman said. She was the doctor's wife, and what she said always counted. "Yes, indeed, the loss of a husband and father is great, and what little we can do to make up for it, we must." She got them all seeing the Tilly family's great loss, and every neighbor brought something except me and Mrs. Willingham. Seeing we was already there, going home with them after dinner, it surprised us. I felt a little glad they got it up, without Mrs. Willingham telling them to. There's nothing like talents being brought out of each neighbor. It won't do for one to have it all. Well, it sure was a surprise to us all. The first one brought some Thanksgiving fruit and "just come to stay a bit on account of the sorrowful time." They kept coming, and bringing things, until the little house was full of folks and all kind of nice things to eat and wear. There was enough to last them the winter through.

I always heard it was an ill wind that brought nobody good—and I was beginning to see the funeral was the best thing that could have happened for us all. The little



woman was so proud and grateful, she just cried.

Jim and John popped corn for the crowd, and it all ended so happy. You would never thought a funeral was took from the little house that day. They begged me to stay all night, after the rest had gone. I don't think they knew whether it was because they was sad or glad that they wanted me. When we looked through everything, and the boys had tried on everything in the way of dry goods, the little woman said, "Oh, Mrs. Fuller, God is good, he took Mr. Tilly, and then turned right around and give me more than what he took." I believed that with all my soul. She did not cry for him, she only grieved for what might have been, and was not. It made me think of my old reader—

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest is this—it might have been."

Poor little woman, this loss is buried now, deep, and I believe in her heart, the sun is already shining a little beam.

"Why, Ma, here's a sack of bran for Flora, and corn for Sallie." "Jim, see if you can't find something for Betsy, too," John piped. "Pa is not any happier than what we are, is he, Mrs. Fuller?"

"No, John, I believe not." We read a chapter and said the Lord's prayer, and then I told them all to let's shut the book about Mr. Tilly, tight, and not open it any more. Nobody knowing him, he was soon forgot.



## CHAPTER 13.

### Christmas Cheer.

Everybody was so busy, the days just flew. Christmas was coming, and no remains of crying or funerals was seen after Thanksgiving.

It all ended so nice, that nobody could squeeze a cry. Mr. Tilly was certainly a blessing to the whole neighborhood, because it was through him that everybody felt kinder and sweeter. It started with Jim's going to the hospital, and now everybody is kin to each other. It was the first grown-up funeral for ten years, and it was a comfort and blessing to us all. The little woman and her boys are heroes with everybody, and I believe the loss of Mr. Tilly will make them rich, with Jim's financiering throwed in. The neighbors was going to have a Christmas tree and festival at the school-house, and everybody was working for it. "Mrs. Fuller, I'm going to get ma a black dress for my gift; don't you think she ought to wear mournin' for pa?" "Jim, I told you we would shut the book, and anyway what you want your ma to wear mournin' for, when she's got more sunshine in her heart than she has had since the day you was borned? No, we'll get her a rocking chair together, so she can rock and sing 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'" "I want to put my money in too," piped John. "Yes, you shall, and she'll have all the blessings together," I told them a few days before Christmas, and we put our money to-



gether and bought a fine one. The Christmas tree and festival was fine. The little woman and her boys got more than anybody else. "They deserve more," Mrs. Ableman said, "than anybody else. Haven't they had more trouble?" That was enough, for nobody would say a thing against Mrs. Ableman's thoughts. Christmas week was a happy one. The school was out for two weeks; the boys had enough wood until it started again; the little woman was taking a holiday from her laces and handkerchiefs, and everybody was spending the day or taking supper with each other. Mrs. Ableman started it by having the Tillys; then everybody wanted them. Of course, they couldn't go to every place every day, and somebody else then was invited, so Mrs. Willingham and me got to go lots in place of them. It was all right to me. A heap of folks say if they can't be first they won't be last; but when it comes to Christmas dinners, there's nothin' in that saying for me. The neighborhood has certainly had a red-letter Thanksgiving and Christmas, too.



## CHAPTER 14.

### Heart Yearnings Satisfied.

We was all getting back to every day life, with its cares and joys too. It can't be Sunday and holiday all the time. Shakespeare must have had a long holiday, when he said, "If all the days were playing holidays, to play would be as irksome as to work."

The whole neighborhood had settled down. The little woman was busy, tho' her business wasn't so good, being everybody bought for the holidays. She said more than once, "how thoughtful and long seeing the neighbors was, Mrs. Fuller, to give us so much. I just put everything not in use in two big boxes and nailed them up till we need them, and we are just as savin' as if we didn't have another thing. There's no use 'cause we've got it, to use it all at once," and I thought she was wise.

The new year was in the second month, and was borrowing winds from March. You couldn't hang your washing out that day, and as night come on, it was worse. I looked over at the little house for the last time before I went to bed. It seemed I could see it shaking by the light of the lamp, going up and down. Then the light went out for good. I waited to see if it was blowed out by the wind, but it wasn't, for it was not lit again. "They've gone to bed to save wood," I said to myself, "and I'll sit up and think a while."

It's funny, people tell you, you can think, or not think, just as you please. This was my night to think, and I defy anybody to





“They’ve gone to bed to save wood, and I’ll sit up and think awhile.”







say I could help it. The sighing wind first brought it about, reminding me of the past. "Here I am, lonely and utterly alone in this world, my heart is restless and sighing, even as the wind, for rest. The light of my life is gone. The star of my life is dimmed. The song of my heart is hushed; happiness was mine for a brief time, but now it only is in making others happy that I find it." I unlocked the little chest so sacred to me. There was the same soldier boy picture, brought to me thirty years ago, just before we were married. It was stained with oft shed tears, and they still are falling. There was the little gown, made by hand, for there were no machines then. There was the little crewel hood, waiting for our baby that was to be. Happy day, that never came. Two mounds in a far off town are the end of it all! With tears in my eyes, and a heavy heart, I pulled the curtains aside, to look once more, at The Little House by the Way, that held the dearest things of life to me. It was very light, too light, and to my horror, the Little House was burning up. I ran screaming all the way. They were saved. The neighbors still talk of the miracle. Jim saved the boxes of things, nailed up, and run for the donkey. I took them all home with me, Sallie, Betsy, and all.

We didn't sleep that night, but talked; and in the early dawn I told my life story to the little woman, and her boys, who are mine too. I told them of the loneliness of my heart and life, and that I wanted them all for mine, and my home for theirs. Jim said, "Ma, le's all of us, Sallie, the donkey, Betsy and all, be hers forever more." I grabbed him to my heart, and God gave us all an



understanding, in the dawning of that morning. The little house by the way is gone forever, but the inmates, all of them, are mine, until God calls them, or me, home.

Who can doubt that while I was thinking, that awful windy night, that God was hurrying, to satisfy my heart's hungering?





Mary  
McNaughton

"I grabbed him to my heart, and God gave us all an understanding, in the dawning of that morning."











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